

## Margaret Sanger

Margaret Sanger was born in Corning [NY] (1) to a huge family (2) with count 'em ten siblings. Her mother was Catholic. (3) Her father was a socialist. (4) She worked as a child to care for them all.

Margaret Sanger said "No Gods and No Masters." (5) "May each woman be the absolute master of her own body."

She moved to New York City as a nurse in the slums. (6) She wrote a column called 'What Every Girl Should Know'. (7) She caused a scandal (8) and risked her freedom by spreading information and contraception. (9)

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Leader of the modern birth control movement, (10)  
Iconic figure for reproductive rights.

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## NOTES

- 1) **Corning:** Sanger was born Margaret Higgins in 1879 in Corning, New York, a town in central New York.
- 2) **Huge Family:** Sanger was the sixth of 11 children.
- 3) **Catholic:** Anne Higgins was a devout Catholic. Sanger's mother had 18 pregnancies (resulting in eleven live births). Sanger blamed her mother's frequent pregnancies for her death at the age of 50.
- 4) **Socialist:** Michael Higgins was a socialist and activist for free public education and women's suffrage.
- 5) **No Gods and No Masters:** "No Gods, No Masters" appeared on the masthead of Sanger's monthly feminist newsletter, "The Woman Rebel", which began publication in March 1914. Though only eight issues were printed, the newsletter established Sanger as the leading advocate for birth control and women's sexual independence in the US.
- 6) **Slums:** Sanger worked in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a crowded immigrant neighborhood. She documented the effects of frequent pregnancies



and home abortions on women's health and wrote about the connection between large families and poverty.

7) **“What Every Girl Should Know”**: Sanger began a column with this title for the "New York Call" in 1912. Her explicit writing about venereal diseases resulted in the column being banned one year later. Sanger later published a book with the same title, dedicated “to the working girls of the world.”

8) **Scandal**: Sanger was indicted in August 1914 for violating the Comstock Act of 1873, which made it illegal to send “obscene, lewd, and/or lascivious” material, including information about contraception and abortion, though the mail. Sanger fled to Europe before her trial, and then, growing publicity helped turn public opinion in her favor. In 1916 the U.S. Attorney's office dismissed the charges against her.

9) **Birth Control Information and Contraception**: The term “birth control” first appeared in the pages of "The Woman Rebel". Sanger opened the nation's first birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916. In the 1930s Sanger won a lawsuit that enabled physicians to dispense information about contraception.

10) **Birth Control Movement**: Sanger founded the American Birth Control League in 1921, which later became Planned Parenthood. She served as president of the International Planned Parenthood Federation from 1952-1959.

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